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Groups of countries in special situations: follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Outcome of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 65/171, in which the Secretary-General was requested to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session a report on the outcome of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, which was held in Istanbul from 9 to 13 May 2011. The Conference adopted the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 and the Istanbul Declaration. This report focuses on the main elements of the outcome documents and maps out the way forward for the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

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I. Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

1. In its resolution 63/227, the General Assembly decided to convene the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries at a high level, with the mandate to comprehensively assess the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action;[1] share best practices and lessons learned, and to identify obstacles and constraints encountered as well as actions and initiatives needed to overcome them; identify new challenges and opportunities for least developed countries; reaffirm the global commitment to address the special needs of the least developed countries; mobilize additional international support measures and actions in favour of the least developed countries; and, formulate and adopt a renewed partnership between the least developed countries and their development partners.

A. Preparatory process

2. The General Assembly mandated the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States as focal point for the preparations of the Conference. The preparatory process was underpinned by a bottom-up approach, starting with country-level preparations feeding into regional- and global-level preparations. The whole United Nations system contributed to the preparatory process coordinated by OHRLLS. A large number of seminars and events were organized, especially a series of 19 pre-conference events, which involved all relevant stakeholders, including Governments, parliamentarians, civil society and private sector representatives. The conclusions and recommendations of those events fed into the draft Istanbul Programme of Action and informed the negotiations of the outcome documents of the Istanbul Conference.[2]

3. The Secretary-General appointed a Group of Eminent Persons in 2010 consisting of nine members, which was co-chaired by Mr. Konaré, former President of the Republic of Mali and Mr. Wolfensohn, former President of the World Bank. The Group's report "Compact for Inclusive Growth and Prosperity" sets out a framework for priority actions for least developed countries' transformation. It concluded that business as usual would not work and that the specific challenges faced by least developed countries needed to be addressed in a new Programme of Action. The report also highlighted that clear, quantifiable targets and the differentiation of responsibilities were crucial for the successful implementation of a new Programme of Action.

4. For the first time three fully fledged tracks for parliamentarians, civil society and the private sector were organized from the beginning of the preparatory process, namely the parliamentary track, the civil society track and the private sector track. Representatives from all three groups participated in the preparatory process at the national, regional and international levels, contributing to the assessment of the Brussels Programme of Action, especially the development of new priorities and

[1] A/CONF.191/13, chap. II.

[2] A more detailed account of the Conference and its preparatory process is contained in documents A/CONF.219/IPC/2, 3, 4, 6, 10 and A/CONF.219/4. Further information is available on the Conference website at www.un.org/wcm/content/site/ldc/home.

commitments. OHRLLS supported the organization of various meetings in collaboration with other United Nations agencies, dedicated steering committees and the Inter-Parliamentary Union and facilitated the participation of representatives from least developed countries in the preparatory process and the Conference itself, as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/171.

5. The negotiation process for a new programme of action for the least developed countries started at the first session of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee, which took place from 10 to 14 January 2011. The second session took place from 4 to 8 April 2011. In between the two sessions and until the beginning of the Conference intensive negotiations took place in informal consultations. It was remarkable that the draft Istanbul Programme of Action was largely agreed before the start of the Conference, despite the difficult prevailing economic situation around the world and the lingering effects of the financial and economic crises, especially in traditional donor countries, some of which had to tighten their budgets significantly. In addition, least developed countries and most other countries were affected by new challenges from increasing volatility of international markets to climate change, for which progress on finding sustainable solutions at a global level was slow. At the same time, the outcome of the 2010 summit on the Millennium Development Goals had a positive effect on the negotiations.

B. Istanbul summit

6. The Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries had several tracks, with the general debate and the Committee of the Whole as the main intergovernmental forums.[3] In addition, six high-level interactive thematic debates on the main topics relevant for least developed countries' development and 45 special and side events on various topics relevant to least developed countries were held. The Parliamentary Forum, the Civil Society Forum and a private sector track were organized on the basis of the intensive preparations in the three tracks. Several members of the Group of Eminent Persons attended the Conference. The co-chair of the Group, Mr. Wolfensohn, and representatives of civil society, the private sector and parliamentarian tracks made statements in the plenary. The Conference was attended by more than 8,900 accredited participants, including 36 Heads of State or Government, 200 parliamentarians, including 10 Speakers of Parliaments, 96 Ministers and 60 heads of the United Nations and other international organizations. More than 1,500 civil society representatives, including from think tanks, and 500 business leaders also participated in the Conference.

7. In the general debate many speakers noted that the Conference was necessary and timely. They highlighted the importance of a focused approach with new priorities in the new Programme of Action. Commitments should be specific, refining earlier approaches and rebalancing priorities in the light of the experience of the last decade. Real and valuable innovation and improvement could come from better adapting existing international mechanisms and resources to the new agenda emerging in the Istanbul Programme of Action.

[3] See the forthcoming report of the Conference (A/CONF.219/7); a detailed programme of the Conference and additional information are available at the Conference website: www.un.org/wcm/content/site/ldc/home.

8. The six high-level interactive thematic debates brought together high-level participants in multi-stakeholder discussions on themes that were crucial to shaping the least developed countries' development strategy in the next decade. The following topics were elaborated on in the debates: enhancing productive capacities and the role of the private sector; resource mobilization for least developed countries' development and global partnership; harnessing trade for least developed countries' development and transformation; good governance at all levels; reducing vulnerabilities, responding to emerging challenges, and enhancing food security; and human and social development, gender equality and empowerment of women. The debates helped to build consensus to renew and reinvigorate partnerships and mobilize additional international support measures and actions in favour of least developed countries.

9. Forty-five special and side events were organized by Member States, United Nations agencies and other related organizations covering a very wide range of subjects of priority interest to least developed countries. These events served as a platform for development partners of the least developed countries to announce initiatives in their support. The close to 100 deliverables range from targeted financial pledges and measures to promote investments to concrete technical cooperation and capacity-building proposals in the area of education and training, and skills development, as well as institutional capacity-building, technology transfer, strengthening of research capacity, knowledge transfer, and the establishment of research and technology institutes. Further projects were launched to help improve data collection and statistical capacity, to provide public information tools and to ensure the monitoring of progress of the Istanbul Programme of Action.[4]

10. The Parliamentary Forum was held on 8 May 2011, and was the culmination of the activities of the parliamentary track of the Conference. Parliamentarians stressed that the Istanbul Programme of Action must be fully integrated into national development plans to ensure national ownership and therefore its effectiveness. They stressed the need for greater accountability by all partners, both globally and nationally, with least developed countries taking full ownership by leading with examples of good governance and improved South-South cooperation. As good governance is a necessary condition for development, the forum highlighted that parliaments have a crucial role to play in all aspects of the implementation, monitoring and review of the Programme of Action and must be able to exercise their legislative oversight and representative function across the full range of development issues.

11. The Civil Society Forum covered a wide range of developmental challenges facing the least developed countries and provided an opportunity for dialogue between Member States, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, international governmental organizations and civil society representatives from women's movements, youth movements, trade unions, peasant federations, media, and human rights defenders. The Civil Society Global Report, which was presented at the Forum, provides an assessment of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action from a grass-roots perspective. The central message delivered from civil society is that the current development paradigm should be revisited; there should

[4] A detailed list of deliverables will be made available on the Conference website, at www.un.org/wcm/content/site/ldc/home.

be a move away from the present market-driven agenda and towards implementing people-centred development policies that require Governments to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Improved governance, particularly a greater emphasis on human rights and gender equality, was among the chief areas of concern. At the conclusion of the Civil Society Forum, civil society organizations issued the Istanbul Declaration, which called on Member States to focus attention on a number of sectors by strengthening investment in agriculture, education, health and information, technology transfer and water and sanitation for all.

12. The private sector track provided an important opportunity for identifying concrete, action-oriented proposals to address least developed country-specific challenges with regard to private sector development. It marked an important milestone for the United Nations, as it was the first time that the private sector was fully integrated into the programme of a major United Nations Conference, allowing the private sector to make a meaningful contribution to the Conference and its outcome. The private sector track had three interlocking components: the High-level Meeting on Investment and Partnerships, the Global Business Partnership Forum, a multi-stakeholder platform for dialogue among business, investors, Government officials and other stakeholders; and the Trade Fair, which showcased commercial opportunities in the least developed countries. The Business Forum spurred recommendations to Governments for new actions, launched new initiatives and publications, and produced new commitments. New commitments and initiatives emerging from the Forum addressed a variety of areas, including broadband and digital development, supporting stock exchanges in the least developed countries, sustainable tourism and guidance for investment in least developed countries.

II. Main features of the Istanbul Programme of Action

13. The Conference adopted the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020[5] and the Istanbul Declaration,[6] which present the strong political will of all Member States for renewed and strengthened global partnership for least developed countries and fulfil the mandate of the Conference. The Istanbul Programme of Action charts out the vision and the strategy for the sustainable development of least developed countries for the next decade with a strong focus on productive capacity. The broad range of actors that are expected to contribute to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action includes donor countries, developing countries, parliaments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system, and international and regional financial institutions.

14. The Istanbul Programme of Action recognizes that least developed countries represent an enormous human and natural resource potential for world economic growth, welfare and prosperity and that addressing their special development needs will contribute to the cause of peace, prosperity and sustainable development for all. It contains a detailed review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, which was largely informed by the report of the Secretary-General.[7] Based on the lessons learned, a number of goals and objectives, principles and priority areas for action are set out in the Programme of Action.

[5] A/CONF.219/3 and Rev.1.

[6] A/CONF.219/L.1.

[7] A/66/66-E/2011/78.

A. Objectives, goals and principles

15. The overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action is to overcome the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries in order to eradicate poverty and achieve internationally agreed development goals, with a special focus on the Millennium Development Goals. It aims specifically to enable half of the least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation. This is closely related to the objective to achieve sustained, equitable and inclusive economic growth in least developed countries to at least a level of 7 per cent annually. With the implementation of the right policies and support measures that are spelled out in the Programme of Action and the political will to include it in development strategies by all stakeholders, that can be achieved. In this respect, the strong commitment on mainstreaming the Programme of Action into development strategies of least developed countries and development partners is an important achievement.

16. The Istanbul Programme of Action focuses on reducing vulnerabilities of least developed countries and addresses new challenges to development, including the effects of the interlinked food, fuel and economic crises and climate change, with a strong focus on structural transformation through increasing productive capacity. It also aims at generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, particularly youth.

17. A number of principles were agreed upon in the Istanbul Programme of Action that will have far-reaching implications for its implementation. The first principle stresses that the ownership and leadership of and the primary responsibility for their development lies with least developed countries themselves. The principle of a balanced role of the State and market considerations entails a qualitative shift in the development strategy for the next decade emphasizing the active role of the State in the development process.

18. Further principles include an integrated approach in which the development process in least developed countries should be viewed in a comprehensive and holistic manner; genuine partnership and solidarity; result orientation; an integrated approach towards peace and security, development and human rights; an emphasis on equity at all levels; and the effective participation, voice and representation of least developed countries.

B. Priority areas

19. The eight priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action, identified during the preparatory process and summarized below, cover all areas relevant for least developed countries' development in a comprehensive manner. The agreed agenda consists of a significant rebalancing of priorities in favour of investment in the productive sectors of the economy and in building the physical as well as human and social capital. The Programme of Action has a strong focus on productive capacity-building and structural transformation as core elements to achieve more robust, balanced, equitable, and sustainable growth and sustainable development. Least developed countries have committed to undertake 126 actions, the development partners have committed to undertake 102 actions, and 16 actions will be undertaken jointly to implement the priority areas.

20. **Productive capacity**. Enhancing productive capacity, as a development multiplier, is the main focus of the Istanbul Programme of Action and is expected to set the tone in all priority areas. As the productive sector remains underdeveloped in most least developed countries, and many of them are still dependent on the export of unprocessed commodities, their ability to produce efficiently is constrained and they are vulnerable to economic shocks, such as commodity price fluctuations. Thus more focus on labour-intensive production is needed to achieve structural transformation of their economies and sustainable poverty reduction.

21. There is a clear commitment to increase investment in infrastructure and agriculture in line with the national priorities of the least developed countries in order to increase value addition and generate employment. Targets include the significant increase in access to telecommunication services, transport infrastructure and energy supply, including electricity generation through renewable energy sources. Actions in this area are a precondition for the diversification of least developed countries' economies into production of goods with higher value addition and decent employment like agro-processing, manufacturing or tourism. An upgrading of value chains from exporting mainly raw materials would be an integral element of the diversification strategy.

22. Concrete provisions for technology transfer were agreed in the Istanbul Programme of Action. Technology transfer is an important factor for innovation in order to increase productivity and enter new markets, which in turn is a precondition for higher value addition and decent employment. Actions in the Programme of Action include undertaking an analysis with the aim of establishing a technology bank and science, technology and innovation mechanisms, which will reduce transaction costs for access to technology. The provision of concessional start-up financing for least developed countries' firms to invest in new technologies was also agreed.

23. **Agriculture, food security and rural development**. As agriculture plays a crucial role in almost all least developed countries in terms of food security and employment, the Istanbul Programme of Action shows a clear preference for revitalizing and diversifying agricultural production in the least developed countries by promoting a holistic approach to expanding employment and national production, raising rural incomes, and achieving a comprehensive approach to food security. Aiming also at increasing investment in rural infrastructure, actions focus on capacity-building, including for agricultural research, as well as safety nets for food emergencies. Support measures focus on small farmers and women farmers whose access to inputs and markets should be strengthened to enable them to avoid malnutrition and shift to high-value products. Furthermore, the Programme of Action calls for the promotion of responsible international investment in agriculture, the elimination of export subsidies for agricultural products, and improvement of the functioning of rural markets.

24. **Trade**. It was agreed to seriously work towards creating favourable market access conditions for all products originating in least developed countries, including through the timely implementation of duty-free quota-free market access, on a lasting basis, for all least developed countries, with simple, transparent and predictable rules of origin; and the reduction or elimination of arbitrary or unjustified non-tariff barriers and other trade-distorting measures. This should be done with the aim of doubling the share of least developed countries' exports in

global exports by 2020, including by broadening the export base of least developed countries. Support would focus on promoting subregional and regional cooperation, including export promotion, and improving regional connectivity through trade facilitating measures. Donors also agreed to enhance the share for least developed countries of the aid-for-trade resources and increase support for the Enhanced Integrated Framework.

25. **Commodities**. The Istanbul Programme of Action further aims to broaden the economic base of least developed countries in order to reduce commodity dependence, and calls for the establishment of commodity management strategies and strategies to enhance productivity and vertical diversification and to increase value-addition. Development partners committed to assist least developed countries to better mitigate and manage the risks associated with commodity price volatility. The Programme of Action also calls for corporate transparency and accountability of companies, including through the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

26. **Human and social development**. In the area of human and social development the commitments to attaining the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 have been reconfirmed in the Istanbul Programme of Action and further progress beyond 2015 in education, health, shelter, sanitation, gender equality and empowerment, and social protection is called for. The Programme of Action focuses on specific issues linking human and social development to increasing productive capacity. Examples for the strong link between the two areas include technical and vocational training, transfer of technology for the local production of medicines, youth employment through apprenticeship programmes, and a supportive environment for private sector investment in housing as well as water and sanitation. While gender equality and women empowerment is still viewed as a cross-cutting issue and thus reflected in all aspects, there is also a dedicated subsection including the commitment of least developed countries to strengthen the role of relevant national mechanisms and scale up resources, as well as to promote effective representation and participation of women in all spheres of decision-making. The establishment and the expansion of social protection systems, which act as stabilizers for the economy and bolster the resilience of the poor, are also encouraged.

27. **Multiple crises and other emerging challenges**. The continued vulnerability of least developed countries to economic shocks and natural disasters and the effects of climate change require a renewed focus on resilience. Development partners committed to support least developed countries' risk mitigation strategies and strengthen their capacities in this respect. As least developed countries need additional, predictable and adequate technical and financial support for climate change adaptation and mitigation, the Istanbul Programme of Action calls for enhancing climate financing provisions, including the early operationalization of the Green Climate Fund, and assisting least developed countries to enhance capacities in clean energy production, trade and distribution, including renewable energy development. To enable least developed countries to deal with the increased scale and scope of natural disasters, the Programme of Action calls for increased public awareness and coherence and decentralization in disaster risk reduction. Development partners committed to support the least developed countries to strengthen their capacity to reduce their vulnerability to natural disasters, including through regional initiatives and sharing of knowledge and expertise.

28. **Mobilizing financial resources for development and capacity-building**. Least developed countries committed to creating conditions for attracting investments, mobilizing savings, promoting private sector development and undertaking necessary fiscal reforms. Donors reconfirmed their commitments to ensure the fulfilment of all official development assistance (ODA) commitments to least developed countries, which would result in the doubling of ODA to least developed countries by 2015 from the current amount of $38 billion. The Programme of Action also calls for increased aid quality, including greater priority of ODA for the productive sector. In this respect, the commitment to use country systems as the first option for aid programmes in support of activities managed by the public sector and to provide least developed country Governments with timely information in a transparent manner on annual commitments and disbursements are of special importance. Donor countries also agreed to review their ODA commitments in 2015 and consider further enhancing the resources for least developed countries.

29. Furthermore, it was agreed to continue debt relief and explore the use of new and improved debt instruments and innovative mechanisms such as debt swaps. This includes the full and timely financing for the implementation of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative by the development partners and specific debt relief measures for least developed countries that are not HIPC, as well as temporary debt standstills between debtors and all creditors.

30. It was also agreed to enhance incentives by home countries for investment in least developed countries, including insurance, guarantees and preferential financing programmes, such as export credits, risk management tools, co-financing and venture capital, as well as private enterprise funds. These measures should focus in particular on sectors that are needed to build up a diversified production base and encourage linkages with domestic production activities and employment creation. In addition, efforts to reduce the transaction costs of remittances were agreed as well as the consideration of a system of short-term migration and support for the International Migrants Remittances Observatory for Least Developed Countries.

31. **Good governance at all levels**. The goals and targets in the area of governance include strengthening good governance, the rule of law, human rights, gender equality and empowerment of women, and democratic participation, including by enhancing the role of parliaments. Least developed countries committed to continue reforming institutional, legal and regulatory frameworks and the public sector to increase the efficiency and the transparency of service delivery, including the fight against corruption. Furthermore, they agreed to improve their human and institutional capacity, including statistical capacity, and to integrate conflict prevention and resolution into national development plans. Development partners committed to support these efforts especially by providing least developed countries with timely information on annual ODA commitments and disbursements to enable accurate budgeting and accounting, promoting policy coherence and coordination of international financial, trade and development institutions, and harmonizing and aligning assistance with national priorities of least developed countries affected by conflict.

32. One distinguishing feature of the priority areas for action is that goals and targets, both qualitative and quantitative, are included for each priority area,

totalling 47. They are also largely in line with the least developed country criteria of per capita income, human assets and economic vulnerability. This balanced approach should facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. Actions related to cross-cutting issues, such as transfer of technology and empowerment of women, are included in specific subsections as well as in other priority areas to highlight their crucial importance.

C. South-South cooperation

33. The Istanbul Programme of Action reflects the new realities that emerged in international economic relations in the section on South-South cooperation. Stronger links between least developed countries and other developing countries in the areas of trade, investment, remittances, financial cooperation and transfer of technology have opened a new window of opportunity for the least developed countries. Developing countries intend to support the effective implementation of the Programme of Action consistent with their capabilities. In this context, the Programme of Action also highlights the critical role subregional and regional cooperation can play in promoting least developed countries' development.

D. Graduation and smooth transition

34. The Istanbul Programme of Action contains a separate section on graduation and smooth transition, with a view to providing incentives for countries graduating from least developed country status through ensuring a smooth transition. Measures in this respect consist of a phasing out of the benefits least developed countries receive in order to avoid any abrupt reductions that could have a negative impact on their sustainable development. A working group on smooth transition is envisaged to this effect. In addition, special support measures to least developed countries should be extended for some time by development partners, including the extension of travel-related benefits by the United Nations system.

E. Implementation, follow-up and monitoring

35. The ultimate success of the Conference rests with the full and effective implementation of its outcome by all stakeholders, including the United Nations system. The Programme of Action contains comprehensive follow-up and monitoring measures at national, regional and global levels, which should be mutually complementary and reinforcing.

36. Necessary steps will be taken to ensure mutual accountability of least developed countries and their development partners for delivering the commitments undertaken by both sides, based on the global partnership and the principle of national ownership.

37. National-level arrangements are particularly important, as national ownership and leadership have to start there. The Istanbul Programme of Action calls for the mainstreaming of its provisions into national policies and development framework and regular reviews at the country level with the full involvement of all stakeholders. Likewise, development partners should integrate the Istanbul

Programme of Action into their cooperation frameworks and monitor the delivery of their commitments.

38. At the regional level, biennial reviews should be undertaken by relevant regional commissions and agencies, involving regional and subregional organizations. These would feed into reviews at the global level, which would involve monitoring of the implementation of the Programme of Action by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, including in the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum. Finally a comprehensive high-level midterm review is envisaged.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

39. The Istanbul Conference has made it clear that there is a continued need to focus on least developed countries, which have been identified as the most vulnerable group of countries, most in need of support. Thus they need to be given high priority by the international community, including the United Nations system. In order to achieve the ambitious objectives of the Istanbul Programme of Action, all stakeholders must contribute to implement the agreed priority actions, which should be pursued in a holistic manner, as they are interlinked.

40. The Istanbul Programme of Action requests the Secretary-General to ensure the full mobilization and coordination of all parts of the United Nations system in the follow-up at the country, regional and global levels. The United Nations system will thus play an active role in the implementation process in all priority areas and at all levels. The United Nations system, including the funds and programmes and the Bretton Woods institutions and other multilateral organizations, should also integrate the Programme of Action into their work programmes and strategic plans and contribute to its monitoring, follow-up and review.

41. Using the Istanbul Programme of Action as a guideline for development efforts in least developed countries by all stakeholders will be the litmus test for its usefulness and a precondition for mutual accountability. Thus it must be mainstreamed into national development plans and strategies of least developed countries. Development partners should support agreed objectives and policies of least developed countries and integrate the Programme of Action into national development and cooperation frameworks. They should also work to create coherence among different policy areas, including ODA, trade, foreign direct investment, debt and finance.

42. The international community must implement the commitments that have been made or renewed in Istanbul in the eight priority areas, including meeting and reviewing quantitative ODA targets for least developed countries, improving the quality of aid, improving market access, continuing with the provision of debt relief, providing home country incentives for foreign direct investment, enhancing transfer of technology, providing enhanced concessional start-up financing for innovative enterprises in least developed countries and improving governance at all levels. South-South cooperation and regional initiatives should play an important role in the implementation of the priority actions.

43. Civil society organizations must use their wide reach at the global, regional and national levels and play a major role in drawing attention to gaps, challenges

and opportunities in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. They should also be involved in focused campaigns on issues relevant to the implementation of the Programme of Action, which should be integrated into their advocacy activities. The United Nations should build on its partnerships with civil society organizations and foundations to advance the implementation of the Programme of Action.

44. Parliaments, which are given a prominent role in the implementation and follow-up of the Istanbul Programme of Action, must play a key role in the mainstreaming of the Programme of Action, for example, by expanding a system of focal points within least developed country parliaments to help them assess their institutional needs and share policy findings, as recommended at .he Parliamentary Forum.

45. The potential of the private sector, ranging from small-scale farmers to multinational corporations, which is key to increasing productive capacity, needs to be harnessed. This includes scaling up of private sector investment, increasing linkages between foreign and domestic firms, and good corporate citizenship, among other issues.

46. For the effective and efficient implementation of the priority actions it is also necessary to take into account recent research findings and best practices. Thus academia, including universities and research institutions, should be invited to generate up-to-date information that can facilitate policy discussions and advice for evidence-based decision-making.

47. Least developed country issues should be regularly included in the agendas of relevant United Nations meetings. In addition, least developed countries and their concerns should figure prominently in United Nations initiatives, such as the Secretary-General's High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, the development of principles for responsible agricultural investment, and the High-level Taskforce on International Financial Transactions for Development, which is part of the Leading Group on Innovative Financing for Development.

48. The United Nations system will also support efforts to make the international economic system and architecture inclusive and responsive to the special development needs of least developed countries, ensuring their effective participation, voice and representation at all levels. The Secretary-General will continue to advocate for issues relevant to least developed countries to be included in the agendas of other key international meetings, including the Group of Twenty meetings.

49. Furthermore, the United Nations system, in cooperation with Member States, will contribute to the implementation of concrete decisions in the Istanbul Declaration and the Istanbul Programme of Action in key priority areas; for example, to undertake an analysis with the aim of establishing a technology bank and science, technology and innovation mechanisms.

50. The Istanbul Programme of Action calls for the support of the United Nations system for strengthened and improved follow-up and monitoring at all levels. At the national level the United Nations Resident Coordinators and country teams will be tasked to support the mainstreaming, follow-up and monitoring, building on existing mechanisms. At the regional levels the relevant regional commissions and agencies will undertake the biennial reviews of the implementation of the Programme of

Action in collaboration with other stakeholders. These national and regional level reviews will feed into the global review.

51. OHRLLS was mandated to support the effective follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the full mobilization and coordination of all parts of the United Nations system, step up its efforts to assist in the mobilization of international support and resources for the implementation of the Programme of Action and provide support to least developed country group consultations. Furthermore, it will intensify its advocacy and outreach activities in order to raise public awareness about the priorities for the implementation of the Programme of Action, which is a precondition for its effective mainstreaming and stakeholder involvement.

52. OHRLLS will also coordinate the establishment of indicators and baselines for the objectives, goals and targets, which are crucial for meaningful monitoring of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. Monitoring should also include the crucial issue of mainstreaming the Programme of Action and thus also focus on the implementation of key actions, including the deliverables announced at the Conference.

53. In addition, the Istanbul Programme of Action calls for improved coordination of national-level arrangements and an increasing focus on key stakeholders, especially on the part of parliaments and the private sector. As the scope for United Nations system-wide coordination has been broadened, the inter-agency consultative group should be institutionalized. High priority should be given to the rapid establishment of a working group on smooth transition, as the number of graduating countries is expected to increase in the coming years. To allow OHRLLS to vigorously and effectively pursue implementation efforts involving all stakeholders, including governments, parliaments, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations system, its capacity needs to be strengthened.

54. In conclusion, with a much stronger focus on implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and giving priority to this group of vulnerable countries by the international community over the next decade, it is possible that half of the least developed countries will reach the graduation criteria and to make a real difference in the lives of people living in least developed countries.